

BUSINESS GROWTH COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM ACCELERATES  
SUCCESS

**ABOUT RP ABRASIVES & MACHINE INC.** RP Abrasives, located in Rochester, New Hampshire, began in 1996 as a business serving manufacturers needing metal deburring and surface finishing. Looking for a way to move back to New England, Joe Shean purchased the company 2002. Later that year, the company's primary customer announced it was moving production to China, and RP Abrasives lost 80 percent of its business. Sadly, Shean was forced to lay off all but 5 of the company's 52 employees. The small company revamped its sales and marketing efforts and developed face-to-face relationships with new customers. Today, RP Abrasives is retaining jobs and serving customers in a diverse range of industries, including medical devices, defense and aerospace, and food processing.

**THE CHALLENGE.** After making great strides in growth, Shean and the team still felt they needed a better way of finding and retaining the right customers. RP Abrasives switched to a new web developer and improved its SEO (Search Engine Optimization) to garner more leads, but the company needed help distinguishing good customers from bad ones and measuring customer job successes. The team was also looking for a way to reduce the cyclical nature of manufacturing and shorten down times.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** Shean received an email from NH MEP, part of the MEP National Network, about a free, hour-long information session called 5 Steps to Sustain Business Growth. He attended the session and was so motivated by what he learned that he signed up for the NH MEP Business Growth Collaborative Program, an in-depth series of workshops and coaching sessions. Some members of the team were skeptical of the program, questioning how it would apply given the company's position in a unique industry. However, those reservations were soon overcome as the company began to benefit from the program.

The Business Growth Collaborative Program taught Shean how to think about marketing concepts, "look at the big picture," and prioritize projects and customers. He learned how to make better use of their website and social media for greater, more measurable market penetration, and the value of customer e-Surveys and a concise elevator pitch. The program even covered business growth analysis such as cost and benefit, and profit and loss. RP Abrasives increased and retained sales and invested in new equipment and processes. But in Shean's mind the key component of the Business Growth Collaborative Program was the collaborative atmosphere where he could learn about what other companies were experiencing. The company continues to grow and add jobs.

"The NH MEP Business Growth Collaborative is an excellent program. It definitely works for you as long as you do the work for it."

-Joe Shean, President

## RESULTS



Added **5** new full-time employees



Retained sales of **\$222,000**



Annual sales projected to reach **\$1,000,000**



Invested **\$62,000** in new equipment and processes

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